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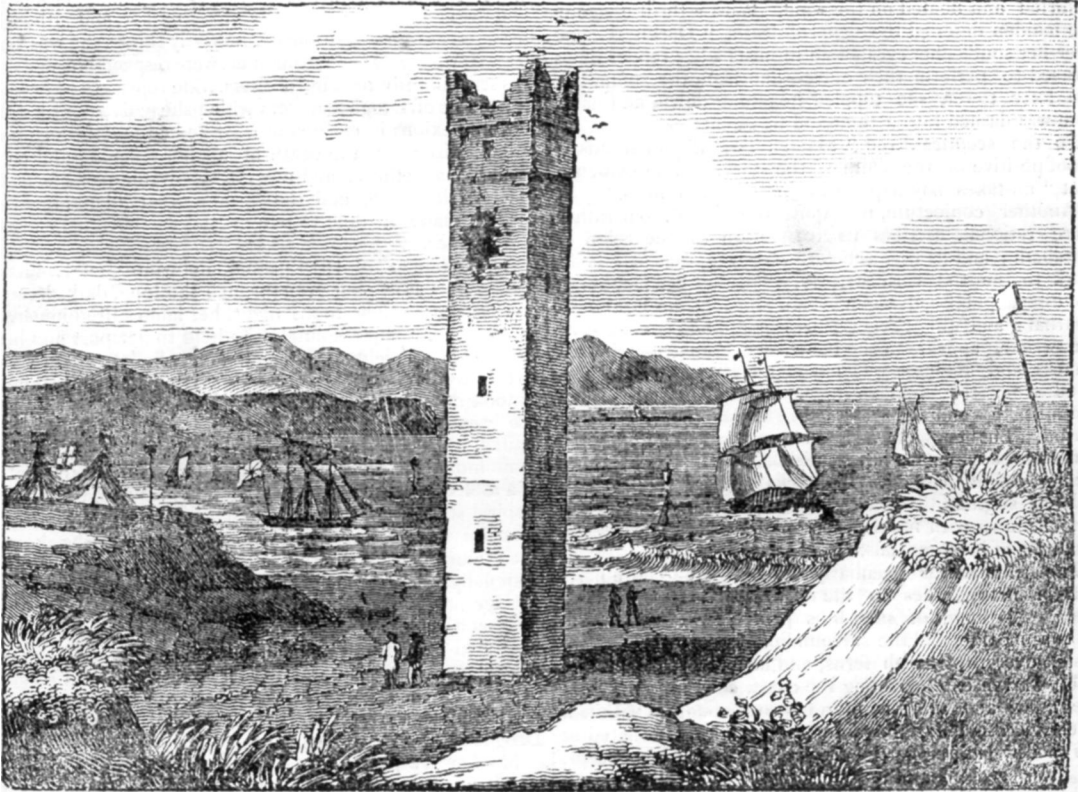
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MAIDEN TOWER.

On the sea-shore at the mouth of the river Boyne, to the south of the entrance, stands a tall, narrow, white tower of considerable elevation, the top terminated by battlements, which is locally termed Maiden Tower.—There are no historical records of the date or purpose of its erection, but from its situation it has evidently been intended for a beacon or land-mark. A short distance inland is an obelisk, called the lady's finger : and these two objects, when brought in a line from the offing, are said to mark with precision the exact angle necessary to make, in order to strike the entrance over the bar to the harbour of Drogheda.

The tower is entered by a low arched door-way, to the north ; it is firmly built, and is barely sufficient to contain a spiral stair to a platform on the top. There are no apartments or windows, except loop-holes. Two large irregular apertures appear near the summit in the east and west sides ; and admission to the platform and parapets is by a trap-door. There is no reason to suppose it has been used as a light-house ; it has no convenience, and does not appear to have been constructed for that purpose : but as a look-out station it cannot be exceeded, as it commands a view of the entire sea-horizon, from Mourne to Bray-head ; and the prospect landward, extends for many miles over the counties of Meath and Louth.

Conjecture has been busy as to the period of its erection and primary use. Oral tradition ascribes it to a very remote period ; and, as usual, the story partakes of the marvellous, "and a lord and a lady," figure in the tale.

"Once upon a time," so runs the legend, "there lived a noble knight who owned the adjacent territory ; his vows

were plighted to a "lady-love," who returned his ardent affection ; but compelled by stern necessity, he was obliged on the eve of his nuptials, to sail to a "far distant land," on a very perilous adventure. With difficulty he tore himself away ; but "honour called him to the field."—Prior to his departure he promised that should he prove fortunate, he would enter the harbour within a year and a day, his vessel, on his return, displaying a milk-white banner ; but on the contrary, if he perished, notice should be given of the direful tidings, by a bloody flag.

"In the interim the lady finding time hang heavy on her hands, amused herself by causing this tower to be erected, from which she might catch the first glimpse of her returning lover ; and here, indifferent to the raving of the tempest, and careless of the assaults of the rude elements, she kept her lonely vigil, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her lover's bark, and hoping for the joyful signal of his safety. Long and dreary seemed the period of her suspense ; wistfully, day by day, as the promised time drew near, did she strain her vision over the expanse of waters ; still the longed for vessel came not in her view, and she sought in vain for the token which was to consign her to joy or misery.

In the mean time the knight was fortunate in his enterprise, and with alacrity prepared for his return, and put to sea ; but the winds and tides were unpropitious, and unavoidably he was delayed beyond the promised period.

At length, through the morning mist, the fair one discovered a speck upon the horizon. With beating heart and straining eyes, she watched its progress. Gradually it drew nearer ; and with unbounded joy she recognised the ship

of her beloved. As yet the signal was not displayed, and alternately the sport of hope and fear, she gazed in breathless expectation. He too, eager to embrace his betrothed, impatiently paced the deck with rapid stride, and chid his adverse fortune, when casting his eyes towards the beach, he discerned through the haze, the battlemented tower; deeming it the certain token of an invading foe, he burned with indignation, and in a burst of martial fury he summoned his warlike followers to arms. Indignantly he pointed out what he considered the mark of his disgrace, and forgetful of his compact, commanded the blood-red flag to be displayed. Slowly its sanguine folds unfurled and floated on the wind. With a thrill of agony the maiden descried the signal of death. "Darkness came over her soul"—her eyes swam in mists—her tender limbs refused to perform their office—and from the summit of the lofty tower, she toppled headlong down, and at its base was dashed into a thousand fragments.

To the sceptical, the "Maiden Tower" still stands as proof positive of the truth of the story, and an evidence that "mistakes may happen in the best of families."

Another conjecture, not quite so poetical, but rather more rational, ascribes its foundation to the reign of Elizabeth; and its use, as before observed, that of a landmark to the toil-worn mariner. This has been stated in an essay, published some years since in the *Drogheda Journal*; and the reasons for this opinion advanced by the writer, appear to be conclusive, both from circumstances and analogy. The name, it is observed, is derived from the "maiden queen";—the use no person can mistake—and the architecture may be referred to that period. But conjecture is all that can be offered. All authentic documents have perished, and like many other memorials of past days, it mocks inquiry. Standing in isolated solitude, it braves the tempest's fury, and seems to look down with indifference on succeeding fleeting generations of busy mortals.

The situation is peculiarly lonely. The shore here, and for many miles to the north and south, is low and sandy. A range of sand-hills protects the inland from surging tide, and the surrounding campaign is a dreary waste, overgrown with ferns, and bent, or sea rush. A rabbit warren extends along the coast, covering an extensive area; and there is not a human habitation within a mile. Occasionally, in summer, the shore is visited at this spot by bathing parties from the interior; but except, on these occasions, the spot is marked by solitude, and strikingly desolate; yet, even under these disadvantages, this tower, a few years since, had a voluntary occupant, an evidence and example of the waywardness of human nature.

In the spring of the year 1819, the inhabitants of a neighbouring hamlet were surprised by observing smoke issuing from an angle of the parapet, and on proceeding to ascertain the cause, they found on the upper platform, a care worn middle-aged female. She had gathered a quantity of bent, of which she had constructed a bed and lighted a fire; she had also brought thither a few articles of humble household furniture, and a wheel, on which she was spinning flax. On being questioned as to her motives for being in that out-of-the-way place, she said she was weary of the world, and had been directed by a vision to retire here; and that in this spot she was determined to spend the remainder of her life. She spoke fluently of revelations made to her; and as there are few characters held in such veneration by the rustic Irish, as a devotee, she became, not only an object of curiosity, but also of sympathy and reverence. In a short time, by the gratuitous labour of the peasantry, a shed roof was constructed over the platform; a rude chimney was erected; a bedstead and table provided; other little matters arranged for her comfort; and she appeared to be quite at home in her aerial habitation, from which she seldom descended, except on Sunday, when she regularly attended service in the Roman Catholic chapel of Mornington, and offered at the altar the weekly produce of her wheel, as she said, to "God, and the Blessed Virgin."

During the summer of 1819 her situation was not only agreeable but flattering. Visitors flocked in abundance to see, and converse with the recluse, and as few obtruded on her privacy without leaving a trifling sum or condi-

ment, her necessities were tolerably supplied. On these occasions she would allow the females of the party to ascend through the trap to the platform; but to the males she was inexorable—she would in no case admit them. Sometimes she would allow them to raise their heads above the level, but no more; and a certain wildness in her eye, and an occasional significant glance at a heavy stool, placed within reach of her wheel, was sufficient to repel the most courageous. Her conversation and answers were generally coherent, except on the particular subject of her voluntary seclusion; but on this topic she wandered, and gave evidence of a disordered imagination.—The writer had an opportunity of seeing her, and although her case was open to suspicion, he verily thinks she was sincere. Her appearance and manners were respectable, and she was scrupulously neat in her dress. She represented herself as a native of Drogheda, from which she had removed with her connexions in early youth. She had met misfortunes—had witnessed the death of all her friends—and outlived her affections; and now, in the evening of life, finding herself alone, and the world a dreary blank, had returned many a mile to live in this extraordinary place and manner.

The summer of 1819 passed, and winter, cold winter, asserted his sway; but even through the long, dark, dreary, and oft-times tempestuous night, her lamp still glimmered in the tower, and resolutely she held to her post and her purpose. A neighbouring gentleman, the late James Brabazon, Esq. of Mornington-house, pitying her fatuity, kindly took care she should not want actual necessities; and she weathered the storm, and spring and summer again smiled upon her, but the novelty was past. She lived some hundreds of years too late. Few thought the sight of a fool sufficient recompense for the labour of toiling up a spiral stair, like an everlasting cork-screw, and the poor creature was neglected and nearly forgotten. She, however, clung with tenacity to her resolution; although occasionally, she might be seen visiting the neighbouring cottages. But winter again set in—her good friend, Mr. Brabazon, was no more; her health failed; her heart sunk; her spirit was subdued; and this stylite of the nineteenth century, who, in a former age, would be thought worthy of canonization, was at length fain to seek a shelter and subsistence in the mendicity asylum of Drogheda.

Maiden Tower is three miles from Drogheda, and stands on the manor of Mornington, which gives title of Earl to the noble family of Wellesley. It will be recollected that this was the title borne by the father of the renowned Duke of Wellington. Near this spot Milesius and his followers first landed in Ireland; an event of which the voracious historian, Geoffrey Keating, gives a very circumstantial account, including that of the wonderful enchantments that prevented his debarkation for three days; most probably the delay was owing to the valour of the inhabitants. Here his son Coalpa was either killed or drowned, and his remains were interred at Coalp, about a mile and a half distant, to which place the circumstance gave name. His grave is still pointed out; and in the vicinity of that church-yard may be seen, in good preservation, an earthen fort, with strong ramparts and entrenchments.

R. A

ANECDOTE OF YOUNG TOM SHERIDAN.

One day the junior Sheridan, who inherited a large portion of his father's wit and humour, dining with a party of his father's constituents, at the Swan, in Stafford; among the company were of course, a number of shoemakers—one of the most eminent of them being in the chair, in the course of the afternoon called on Tom for a sentiment. The call not being immediately attended to, the president, in rather an angry tone, repeated it; Sheridan, who was entertaining his neighbours with a story, appeared displeased with this second interruption, and desiring that a bumper might be filled, he gave—"May the manufacture of Stafford be trampled upon by all the world." It is needless to say that this sally, given with apparent warmth, restored him to the favor of the president.